DEPARTMENT OF STATE TELEGRAM

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FROM: AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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TAGS: SHUM PINS AR
SUBJECT: Journalist Enrique Jara Comments on his Captivity and Future Prospects

ACTION: SECSTATE WASHDC

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CONFIDENTIAL BUENOS AIRES 3293
LIMDIS
FOR ARA/USOAS and ARA/ECA

REF: Buenos Aires 3260

LIMDIS

1. SUMMARY. Jara was released from detention without any charges lodged against him. During his captivity he discovered that "La Opinion's" publisher Jacobo Timerman had kept certain crucial facts from his senior staff which he had a moral obligation to reveal. These included the ownership of the newspaper and former Economy Minister Gelbard's undue influence over the paper's editorial policy. Nevertheless, Jara sees Timerman as the victim of antisemitism and an attempt to throttle the free press. Jara believes "La Opinion's" failure is imminent. The Timerman family has dismissed Jara as a result of Jara's breaking with Jacobo. Jara is anxiously awaiting the final decision as to whether he will be hired for a key

DRAFTED BY: A/POLCOUNS:AGFreeman:jr
DRAFTING DATE: 5/4/77
TEL EXT: 121
CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY: DCM:MChaplin
CLEARANCES: USIS:KRay
AMB:RCHill

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job in the OAS Human Rights Commission. He fears the OAS commission members are not made of solid stuff and will not wish to hire an individual who has been detained by the security forces of a member state even though through no fault of his own. END SUMMARY.

2. In conversation with Emboffs, Enrique Jara discussed his understanding of the genesis and current status of his candidacy for position of Secretary General of OAS Human Rights Commission. He said that Deputy Permanent US Representative Robert White, whom he had first met during the latter's last visit to Buenos Aires, evidently had played an instrumental role in presenting his name for consideration. He had not sought the job and the offer had come as a surprise. Some weeks ago he was called to Washington where he met Orfila, White and other members of the commission to discuss the prospect of his taking the job. Before agreeing to his candidacy, Jara consulted the Argentine and Uruguayan ambassadors to the OAS and Admiral Mendia (who he described as the unofficial eyes and ears of the armed forces in the Argentine diplomatic community in Washington) to determine whether there might be any objections perceived by either government. As none were expressed and some of those consulted even said they viewed his candidacy with sympathy, he then filled out the necessary forms, including insurance papers.

3. Jara said he felt somewhat disconcerted by Orfila's remarks, as reported in the press, following Jara's arrest, which gave the impression that Orfila knew nothing about Jara's candidacy and bore no responsibility in the matter. Jara also said he could not help feeling that the manner in which the Human Rights Commission eventually disposed of his nomination (i.e. their final decision in this matter) in the light of his detention and subsequent release (without any charges ever having been lodged against him by Argentine security forces) was a small test of the commission's degree of commitment and sincerity with respect to the human rights issue. He did not have a very high opinion of the OAS to begin with, nor of the way decisions were reached in that institution, and he feared that the commission would now back away from approving his nomination. Now that he had resigned effective Apr 29 from the staff of "La Opinion" at the request of the Timerman family, he had a very real interest in taking the OAS job and he would not make any other plans regarding his future until the committee met next week and made its decision.

4. Jara also discussed his imprisonment at considerable length. The commando group that took him from his home told his wife that they were Montoneros as they ripped out the telephone wires. Shortly after the commando group departed from Timerman's house, Jara was blindfolded and

remained that way for several days. His blindfold was not removed until he was taken from his initial place of captivity to La Plata (about an hour's drive away). His captors gave him no food or water the first day and a half. He does not know where he was held during this initial period. During this period his captors applied electric shock to several parts of his body while interrogating him. (NOTE: This is the single most sensitive element of his testimony and we promised that it would be held in strictest confidence.) The questions they asked of him appeared to be diverse, they came in no logical order and lent the impression that the interrogators were basically on a fishing expedition. Not all the questions were related to the Graiver case or the newspaper's alleged connections with Graiver or with subversion. For example, the interrogators had some knowledge about his nomination for the OAS post and wanted to know more about it.

5. Jara said that Col. Camps, the Chief of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police, told him, both during his captivity and following his release, that the police had gone over every inch of his life and were convinced that he had a perfectly "clean" moral and political record. Camps even apologized for the treatment he had received, stating that the police regretted having to use such methods, but they were a necessary evil. There was a war on, and sometimes errors

were committed in wartime. In Jara's case there was no question but that he had been detained by error, and Camps was sorry. If there were anything he could do for Jara to rectify matters, Jara should just let him know. Jara further stated that while he had suffered during his captivity, he viewed the experience as the supreme test of his life and he was satisfied that he had come through his ordeal without having betrayed his ideals or his professional colleagues.

6. Jara regretted he could not say the same for Timerman. Jara confirmed that he had broken definitively with Timerman. Not only had Timerman never told him about Graiver's interests in "La Opinion," but Timerman had downright lied when Jara questioned him sometime in the past about rumors then circulating to that effect. During one of the several crossexamination sessions in which Timerman, Jara, Casasbellas and Mrs. Graiver were compelled to participate, Timerman admitted the Graiver interest in the enterprise when Graiver's widow confronted him with her shares in hand. Even assuming that Graiver did have Montonero connections, a question about which Jara said he had no information at all to contribute, he doubts that Timerman would have known that. It was inconceivable to him that Timerman would knowingly link up with somebody who had Montonero ties, given Timerman's clearcut position against terrorism

of any political stripe. However, Timerman had a moral obligation to level with his senior staff about such a critical factor as the ownership of the newspaper and Timerman had lied by maintaining that the enterprise was wholly owned by his family. This point was of paramount importance because each member of the editorial staff had assumed a great personal risk when they agreed to join Timerman in the noble venture of printing a truly free and independent newspaper of a quality theretofore unknown in Argentina. Even worse, Jara was convinced that Timerman had betrayed the paper's ideals by accepting bribes from Gelbard in order to mislead the public with regard to the Aluar scandal. (Jara denied that this was common practice among Argentine newspapers.) Jara said he felt doubly betrayed on this point because he had explicitly made the point to Timerman when he joined the paper that "La Opinion" had to maintain a specially high standard in this regard if it were to remain free, and Timerman had said at the time that he was in total agreement. Most despicable of all, Jara said, was Timerman's attempt during his interrogation to slough off responsibility for "La Opinion's" editorial line to other senior members of the staff. Timerman, for example, called Casasbellas a marxist, which Jara denied.

not common but widespread

7. Jara suspected that Timerman had received the same kind

of treatment which he had suffered. He overheard the guards yelling epithets of "dirty Jew" at Timerman. At one point Timerman was asked whether he and Gelbard were members of the same religious sect. Timerman's response that he was a practicing Jew whereas Gelbard lived outside his faith did not seem to please the guards, who evidently were searching for proof of some "sinarchic plot" afoot. Jara believed that the basic elements of the eventual charges against Timerman would be: (a) defrauding Graiver of his shares; (b) accepting bribes from Gelbard; and (c) subversive connections--if the investigators can garner sufficient proof that Graiver indeed was involved with terrorists. Jara had no doubt that "La Opinion" would fold before the end of the current month on account of the financial and psychological strains it was undergoing. Advertising already had fallen off sharply and the staff was quitting. Jara agreed with our observation that the outside world would view the bankruptcy of "La Opinion" as proof that Timerman had been the victim of antisemitism and a deliberate attempt against freedom of the press, and in Jara's view such an interpretation would be justified.

8. Nevertheless, he regretted having given a recent interview to a Uruguayan newspaper. He was interviewed in a weak moment, having just been released from captivity, and his psychological defenses were down. The paper, he

later discovered, was only interested in doing a hatchet job on Timerman, quoting only Jara's critical comments.

9. Jara was eloquent in his statement that he now had become an instant expert in human rights violations as a result of his recent experience. Having survived the auto-da-fe prepared for him by the Argentine security services, he reiterated, it would be ironic if he were turned down for the OAS post as a result of his arrest. If that were to happen, it would tend to substantiate his suspicions about the ~~hypocracy~~ hypocrisy of the OAS. He emphasized that no charges had been lodged against him and that he would not have been released had there been the slightest shred of suspicion against him. He felt his faith in humanity would suffer a serious reverse if it turned out that he could not find any job because of the unjust detention he had suffered.

10. COMMENT: We were pleased to have had the opportunity to talk with Jara and were impressed by his candor. His interview with the Uruguayan journal lent itself to the possible interpretation that his captors had somehow persuaded him to turn against Timerman publicly and attack him gratuitously, dishonestly and unfairly. We think Jara gave a satisfactory accounting and explanation of his changed views regarding Timerman in his conversation with us, although we reserve judgment on some of the judgments he made. On the basis of this limited observation, we would

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say he came through as a man of moral integrity and strong character.

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